

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO CAUSES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
AMONG YOUNG SPOUSES IN MABVUKU, HARARE, ZIMBABWE**

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ABSTRACT

Harmony in marriage is critical to the well-being of family and society. The family is the mainstay of society and the nation. When it is plagued with violence and abuse, the whole society is fragmented and in desperate need of healing. Domestic violence causes traumatized families and leaves a broken society which consequently breeds nations that are overwhelmed by grief or frustration. Harmony in spousal life should be prioritized for the comfort of its members and society at large.

Young Christian couples in Mabvuku frequently resort to physical violence when faced with seemingly irreconcilable differences. Instead of amicably uniting and resolving together, facing the challenges as a combined force, some spouses blame each other for the situation before them. In such disputes, domestic violence often erupts. Several young spouses seem to be unable to resolve conflict harmoniously without resorting to violence. Others seem to be unskilled enough to devise methods and strategies that are anti-violence. These Christian young couples seem to have one remedy to spousal conflict, violence-like someone with only a hammer, treats every problem like a nail. Every week, 5-10 cases of domestic violence are reported to the Mabvuku police station, (Shiri, 2024)

It is a tragedy to assume that because spouses live together, they instinctively know and understand each other. Those who claim to be Christians will never know how to worship until they know how to love God and each other. Love is of God. The unconverted heart cannot originate nor produce this plant of heavenly growth, which lives and flourishes only where Christ reigns, (Pipim, 2007).

Although domestic violence has become a global threat and a lot has been said about the vice, this paper is specifically centered on young Christian couples in the Mabvuku Community where rare studies have been conducted yet.

KEYWORDS: *Domestic Violence, Communication, Abuse, Empowerment, Love, Unity, Harmony, Mayhem, Infidelity.*

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This study seeks to find out the causes of domestic violence among Christian young couples in Mabvuku and explore alternative strategies to alleviate the scourge and promote love respect and harmony among couples. To assist spouses to be aware that marriage determines their happiness or sadness in this life and in the life to come. As sincere Christians, they should be always conscious of making plans that warrant divine approval.

Findings

Domestic violence knows no gender, religion, or profession. Lack of induction when these young spouses tire the note in matrimony. The dearth of spirituality among professed couples. Inadequate family life resources compounded spousal challenges too. Too prescriptive strategies paid insignificant changes in couples. More empowerment seminars must be offered to young couples.

Methodology

The researcher implored the qualitative research technique which entailed the use of in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observations. The study aimed to reflect on how young Christian couples in Mabvuku comprehended the importance of adhering to biblical principles of marriage and how it impacted spousal relationships. The Happy Home Ministry was a strategy designed to help these young couples through enrichment seminars and counseling programs.

Domestic violence appears to be rampant among young Christian couples in Mabvuku. What seems to be disturbing is that this transpires against the backdrop of clear biblical teachings like:

1. Christians should highly esteem love in all their endeavors. Love suffers long, love is kind, does not envy, does not parade itself, is not puffed up, does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity but rejoices in truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all, love never fails, (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).
2. The Bible spells, "Be angry, sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath. Neither give place to the devil, (Ephesians 4:26-27).
3. Christians are encouraged to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, and forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us, (Ephesians 4:32).

Although these young Christian couples are exposed to the above biblical principles, they seem to be oblivious to the fact that the character of the home impacts much on the condition of society and that the weight of each family's influence will tell in the upward or downward scale, (White, 1905). Yet love is not genuine when it keeps faith and spirituality at a distance and greets morality with resistance, (Pipim, 2007).

Biblical Expectations on Marriage

The Bible admonishes man to live joyfully with his beloved wife all the days of his life, (Ecclesiastes 9:9), and to make their home a little heaven on earth, (White, 1952). Couples must make the home so pleasant and cheerful that it becomes the most attractive place on earth for every family member.

Husbands are mandated to love their wives as Christ did to the church and gave Himself for her, (Ephesians 5:25). In every Christian home, kindness and patience should rule, and love be revealed in action, (White 1893). Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love, (1 John 4:8). Husband and wife must learn to respect each other and promote love and confidence within the sphere of marriage. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God who desires only the services of love, and love cannot be commanded, nor can it be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened, (White, 1898).

Unity is the fundamental pillar of the marriage institution. The couple must be able to leave and cling to each other. Coherence and harmony are the products of espoused unity by every proponent of peace.

As God's people, couples are supposed to be agents of wholeness and harmony wherever they live. Their fundamental role is to be a community of blessing for the sake of others, (Fleming, 2013).

Literature Review

Causes of domestic violence in Mabvuku Young Christian couples.

More often, domestic violence does not happen in a vacuum. Several triggers punctuate, fan, and hatch this vice. These causes range from social to economic matters and if they were guarded against, most marriages could be transformed from bitterness to sweetness while relationships would be reinforced. These causes include the following: poor communication, verbal abuse, financial issues, insecurity, poverty, and infidelity.

Poor Communication

Problems and crises are inevitable in spousal life but, the couple should learn to talk them over. Outstanding challenges should be settled before bedtime. Exchanging ideas, thoughts, opinions, knowledge, and data so that the message is received and understood with clarity and purpose should be every spousal motive in communication. A breakdown in communication among spouses is one of the key factors in marriage problems. The happiness of a couple can be measured to a large degree by the effectiveness of their communication. How a couple communicates is one of the most powerful factors affecting the success or failure of their relationship, (Pelt, 2008). Deliberate listening is highly called for in every conversation. The spouse should be able to articulate both verbal and non-verbal elements in every discourse.

Empathy and sympathy should season every discussion. Allowing one to express freely and finish their speech shows respect to the listening spouse. None should assume they understand what has not been said by encroaching into someone's narration before exhausting the speech. Threats are not called for in any way. Respect, love, and peace should undergird spousal conversations. To listen and also to be heard are keys to assertive communication, (Sutton, 2006).

Verbal Abuse

No abuse occurs in a vacuum. Most domestic violence issues stem from verbal abuse. Verbal abuse is a kind of battering that doesn't leave evidence comparable to the bruises of physical battering. It can be excruciating, and recovery can take much longer, (Evans, 2010). Emotional abuse is not always so easily identified. It is difficult to classify exactly what is wrong, and easier to minimize what is going on since it leaves no bleeding or bruised. Although the

neighbors cannot hear it through the walls, emotional abuse is no less destructive than physical abuse and it is no less wrong, (Holcomb, 2004). Admittedly, verbal violence is problematic to deal with because there is no tangible witness to it. The person can be very different in public and at the same time very vicious in private. While outside, friends and relatives view the abuser as a good person, yet he is very brutal in secret. The effects of verbal abuse are so devastating to its victim although they are invisible. The target is psychologically wounded and internally bleeding. The surroundings are not cognizant of what is happening. Furthermore, the abuser normally denies the charge since the ill-treatment takes place in isolated environments. It is not only the bruises on the body that damage but the wounds of the heart and the scars on the mind, (Mirza, 2024). Unknown to the public, close relatives, and acquaintances, these invisible traits of verbal abuse silently destroy life.

While nobody condones wife-beating, it is equally good to consider both sides of the same coin. Prudence calls for reasoning from cause to effect. At times one wonders how a man comes to beat his wife, yet the wife's words might be the cause of the husband's emotional abuse. It is observed that women use an average of 20,000 words a day, in comparison to a mere 7,000 words that men utter, (Hammond, 2013). There could be a high probability of insulting one's spouse consciously or unconsciously. It seems women have learned to fight with words since they are masters of the art, and husbands can feel helpless before the on-slaughter.(Eggerichs, 2004).This becomes the dilemma of the whole puzzle when domestic violence intricacy inevitably becomes visible where the victim becomes the victimizer.

The secretive nature of verbal abuse is quite a betrayal to the victim as it gradually becomes more intense over time. It also takes different forms and disguises itself more frequently. The ultimate result is the erection of a gulf between the victim, and the abuser, yet no distance should be kept between spouses. Seeing things differently does not mean that a husband is losing control and dominance over the wife. Rather, independent thinking enhances decision-making since issues are analyzed from different perspectives, and sound judgment is reinforced. Allowing each other to finish their statements and respond respectfully even when they see differently promotes healthy discussions. Meanwhile, disruptions and interruptions cultivate unhealthy communications and ultimately spoil conversation. Interpersonal skill impartation to spouses could enhance spousal interactions.

By all means, yelling at each other should be avoided among couples unless a house is on fire, and you are warning your spouse of the impending menace. Trying to understand what one is conveying is important to effective communication and relationship enhancement. It is grievous to note that physical abuse is always preceded by verbal abuse, (Evans, 2010). Yelling at living things does tend to kill the spirit in them. While sticks and stones may break our bones, words break the hearts, (Fulghum, 2024). Nothing is as demotivating as a derogatory utterance. Words indeed destroy an individual's personality. Incautious speech does reduce the dignity of the affected spouse even to the level of starting to doubt her perceptions because of the way the abuser counteracts her feelings. It also breeds an inferiority complex for the abused.

With respect, facts clearly stated should be acknowledged and not avoided but should be appreciated even if it is contrary to what one wants to hear. When the wife's reasoning capacity far outweighs the husband's, he tries to demonstrate his superiority as head of the family by beating his wife. Beating a wife as a solution for a man to reassert his status as head of the family particularly when he is threatened by the wife's superior intellectual power, (Mwanwenda, 1996)

is another evil. The husband should never feel threatened by his wife's acumen since the two do not compete in running their marriage. They should rather complement each other and always bear in mind that constructive ideas need not be shunned but ought to be communicated in a respectful, non-threatening manner and should also be welcomed. The husband should ask himself, what is it that makes the woman submissive without aggression or cohesion? Reasserting one's status by beating a wife is a form of domestic violence.

Financial Issues

Financial issues are also a cause of domestic violence. Questions on how couples should use their hard-earned income, who should be responsible for all family financial obligations, or how relatives should be supported seem to be draining peace in married homes. Money can also become a controversial issue. A housewife may feel that the husband is not providing her with enough money to meet the domestic expenses. Couples may accuse each other of either overspending or being stingy, (Mwamwenda, 1996). Disputes from money issues more frequently become the cause of domestic violence. Couples should understand that times have changed. Depending on a single income alone might not suffice for family financial commitments. These days both husband and wife contribute to the welfare of their family. While the husband might be giving insufficient funds for all domestic expenses, the issue of overspending cannot be ignored. At times, impulse buying overrides the budget and this sudden purchase of items without any pre-shopping intention becomes the basis of contention. Sometimes if the husband's income is too little for the family and the financial obligations overwhelm every cent, it also promotes discordance due to frustrations.

On the other hand, a wife might feel that she is not under obligation to use her money on family duties but spend everything on personal or selfish needs. The husband is left alone to meet all the family's financial necessities. This becomes unbearable on the part of the husband who might be frustrated about bearing all the family's financial burdens alone. Although every spouse is entitled to their money, there is a need to assist each other according to the family budget.

Another disgraceful scenario could be when the husband is heavy-handed, dictating how every cent should be used. In some instances, the man does not allow his wife to be employed for him to control her through his financial muscle. The wife begs for money while the husband demands accountability for every cent spent. This kind of behavior is abusive and brings torment to the spouse. The wife also needs pocket money she uses on her own without accountability to the husband. The aspect of budgeting plays a pivotal role in solving financial challenges. Living within a couple's means boosts contentment and reduces unnecessary anxiety which might escalate to domestic violence. Solving financial problems could help resolve marriage challenges too.

Insecurity

If the wife is more educated and remunerated better than the husband, it sometimes breeds an inferiority complex in the husband who in turn uses threats or beatings as a scapegoat for his deficiencies. Even those who are reputable in society might also be abusers. Does one wonder why husbands become abusers? Why do they batter their wives? Abusers are insecure people who consider anyone who crosses their path to be a personal threat, (Vandeman & Finley, 1992) One wonders how a spouse could be a personal threat instead of a suitable helper. Those people with a sense of insecurity tend to resist any noble suggestion from their spouse. They usually

become nagging or hot-tempered for no apparent reason even on an innocent oversight. This kind of compensatory behavior sounds retrogressive to marriage relationships.

The wife is not in any way a rival but is there to assist and advise as an equal partner for the good of their marriage. Any sign of an inferiority complex on the part of the husband does more harm in conflict management than good. A domineering spirit is not called for where love reigns. Success comes through spousal support, care, and understanding while accusations, dislikes, and quarrels breed failure. Couples should learn to support each other for the success of their marriage and their endeavors.

Competition

Husband and wife are not opponents in marriage and should by no means be competing against each other. Several women have transformed from competitors to partners much to the amazement of their husbands. Man must take pride in what his wife does and stop the blame game, (Cooper, 2005). When spouses begin to compete with each other they have lost the essence of marriage. Instead of cherishing the spirit of rivalry, spouses should learn to complement one another and celebrate their successes together. The focus should shift from what one should get to what positive contribution should one bring to the relationship. Selfishness has bred most of the spousal challenges that have caused domestic violence in most families. When the husband finds happiness in meeting the needs of the wife and the wife finds amusement in meeting the happiness of her husband harmony, and peace are generated in this home. This removes competition between spouses.

Poverty

The absence of enough means to meet necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter remains a challenge in underdeveloped countries of which Zimbabwe is no exception. The link between violence and lack of economic resources and dependence is very evident, they are wedged in an abusive relationship, (Patra, 2018). Poverty is at the heart of all the key problems in Africa, be they social, spiritual, or moral. This is expressed in five noteworthy areas: hunger, low income, disease, dehumanization, and injustice, (Adeyemo, 2009). These five poverty factors contribute immensely as causes of domestic violence. Most family instability stems from inadequate resources. The harsh economic atmosphere spouses are working under does give rise to additional stress on the family. Unemployed husbands spend meager resources that the woman earned on drinking or his girlfriend. The mother needs to use the money for healthcare or school fees and gets very upset. The husband will then vent his frustration on his wife because she is weak. These households become unbearable, and it is the woman who suffers most, (Mahere, 2021). While a harsh economic environment adds stress to families, it should be the duty of every couple to set their priorities all right. Prudence should be exercised especially in the use of depleted resources. Sacrificing family resources for pleasure could be the worst thing a normal person could do. A man should learn to work for the family and appreciate the toils of the wife. Venting one's frustrations on the wife is unacceptable. It is not proper for a husband to find joy in the pain and tears of his wife. Poor spouses can live in harmony even in their poverty if love and respect are esteemed.

A lot of men feel that once they pay the bride price, they have 100 percent control over their wives. This means controlling the woman's sexuality, earnings, and reproductive health, (Mahere, 2021). Payment of lobola does not mean that a wife's rights have been relinquished or

she has become a subject of abuse by the husband. While lobola is a mere token of appreciation, man should learn to respect and honor his wife. Too much control might be an indication of a lack of love. This kind of behavior erodes innovation and motivation on the part of the abused spouse.

Poverty seems to negatively impact couples as it brings with it a plethora of deficiencies and if couples fail to manage their crisis, they end up being frustrated and trapped in the net of squabbles and commotion. Being poor or near-poor brings with it a host of factors: chronic shortages of money, accumulating debts, low levels of literacy, high rates of unemployment, incarceration, substance abuse, depression, and domestic violence, poor houses, and unsafe neighborhoods, (Ooms & Wilson, 2004). Although scarcity is not the only source of domestic violence, the above observation seems to be prevalent in third-world countries like Zimbabwe; where inflation is ever on the rise and the unemployment rate has escalated to unbearable levels. It becomes difficult to live in such a toxic environment even if one is very educated. While the essence of education is partly to reduce poverty through employment, nonetheless, education without a source of stable income leads to poverty. Chronic food insecurity and lack of access to health and education might negatively impact spouses living in poverty. In addition, if all these chronic shortages are not managed properly, there will always be mayhem in couples. Spouses will blame each other for basic shortages and inadequate resources.

Infidelity

Infidelity, or cheating is another marriage deviation that has negatively impacted spouses. Infidelity is the act of being unfaithful to a spouse. It normally means engaging in sexual or romantic dealings with a person other than one's significant other, breaking a commitment or promise in the act. Infidelity comes off as another devastating cause of domestic violence. If a spouse discovers or suspects that the partner is cheating on him or her, there is bound to be an uproar. At times these suspicions are necessitated by envy. Jealousy seems to be a common phenomenon among married couples. The problem with jealousy is that it undermines both the trust and love in which a marriage relationship is established. Society holds that your wife or husband is exclusively yours and therefore is intimately unshareable, (Mwamwenda, 1996). The aspect of exceptionality in sexual intimacy in couples appears to be a genuine cause since this promotes faithfulness among couples and also curbs sexually transmitted diseases. Could this be the appropriate place for the phrase, "Love is jealousy?" People with jealousy easily succumb to domestic violence. Once they suspect that the spouse is cheating on them, they resort to domestic ferocity. The individual often criticizes, scolds, insults, and physically attacks their partner, (Melgosa, 2014). Usually, ladies are susceptible to the unusual movements of their spouses.

On the other hand, it appears love is not jealousy since jealousy is a sign of insecurity. However, couples should build trust in each other if love should flourish between them and should abhor multiple partners. Where there is trust and respect, there is less suspicion. Nonetheless, some people do not care whether they obtain money through dignified means or not. Their quest for wealth may lead them to infidelity. Some men can abuse other people's wives for sexual pleasure. At times promotion at work comes with sexual favors first. No wonder some spouses are accused of infidelity in the workplace. These accusations spark domestic violence between spouses.

Consciousness and Acknowledgement of Domestic Violence in Mabvuku

Following an interview that was carried out on 13 January 2024 by the researcher to find out if people were aware of domestic violence and which type of violence was prevalent in Mabvuku and attempting to discover which gender between males and females were the chief perpetrators, the following were the gathered results. The majority of the respondents indicated that they had heard about domestic violence. The news and media have been the main channels through which people have accessed domestic violence information. Others admit that they had witnessed it from their homes and their neighbors. The table below reveals the types and levels of domestic violence in Mabvuku.

TABLE1. CLASSIFICATION LEVELS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN MABVUKU

Type of Abuse	Total Sampling (N=41)	Percentage (%)
Physical	32	78
Economic	6	15
Sexual	2	5
Psychological	1	2

Among the four types of abuse, physical violence appeared to be dominant in Mabvuku. 78% of the respondents indicated that physical violence is on the top list, followed by economic abuse constituting 15%. Sexual abuse ranks third, at 5%. Psychological abuse seats at the bottom representing 2%.

Data reflecting on which gender dominates more than the other in domestic violence was also gathered. Below is an alternative table revealing the perpetrators of domestic violence.

TABLE 2. PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN MABVUKU

Perpetrators	Grand Sample (N=41)	Percentage (%)
Men	36	88
Women	3	7
Men and Women	2	5

On the issue of ascertaining the main perpetrators of domestic violence, Table 2 shows how the respondents reacted. The table reveals that 88% of domestic violence emanated from men while women perpetrators constituted 7%. Only 5% stemmed from both men and women.

On 27 January 20224, an interview was conducted by the researcher to find out the causes of domestic violence in Mabvuku. The table below shows the results established in sequential order.

TABLE 3. CAUSES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN MABVUKU IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Causes
Poor Communication
Financial Issues
Insecurity
Competition
Poverty
Infidelity

The above results reflect the sequential order of causes of domestic violence among Christian young couples in Mabvuku. The list ranges from poor communication, financial issues, insecurity, competition, poverty to infidelity.

Summary of Main Findings

Physical violence appeared predominant in Mabvuku. 78% of the respondents placed physical violence as the number one vice that militates against spousal harmony. Men emerged as the main perpetrators of domestic violence. 88% of domestic violence emanated from men. Cases of domestic violence ranked as follows poor communication, financial issues, insecurity, competition, poverty, and infidelity.

Happy Home Ministry

The happy home strategy is a response to domestic violence among Christian young couples and seeks to improve couples' relationships by promoting love, respect, and harmony in Mabvuku. Another objective of this strategy is to be able to inculcate interpersonal skills to these young couples. To create an awareness of Christ's interest in marriage as its principal initiator and encourage every spouse to learn and rely on Him as the anchor of these relationships.

Vision: To create an environment of love, respect, and tolerant society among Christian young couples in Mabvuku.

Theology: Marriage is the fundamental pillar of the home establishment.

Mission: To revive and reflect Christ-like love to my spouse and community.

Moto: Behold, how good and pleasant it is when spouses live together in peace, (Psalm 133:1).

Plan

- Encouraging building relationships among spouses.
- Creation of a happy home family through a Christ-like life.
- Promote biblical principles among couples
- Family life enhancement seminars.
- Counseling and prayers for the concerned couples.
- Conscientizing couples on little foxes that spoil the marriage vine.
- Effective communication
- Couples' Birthday and anniversary celebrations
- Couple's Outings

Implementation

My Happy Home Strategy began by meeting and sharing my vision with the local church pastor and the first elder of Mabvuku church. Then the pastor through his board recommended to the researcher 8 couples who were assimilated into the focus group. After sharing the vision with the focus group, the same group coordinated the program and mobilized people. Then a meeting was scheduled with all young couples. At the meeting, the researcher shared the advantages of Happy

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